Start date: April 2026
PEA reference: FP-Collab-024a

Deaf Smart Energy

Vulnerability and Carbon Monoxide Allowance (VCMA)
Project Eligibility Assessment (PEA)







UK GAS DISTRIBUTION NETWORKS

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Project registration table

Project summary	
Project title	Deaf Smart Energy
Strategic area	Fuel Poverty & Energy Affordability
Lead partner name	Royal Association for Deaf People (RAD)
Lead GDN(s)	Cadent
Funding GDN(s)	Cadent & WWU
New/Updated **(indicate as appropriate)**	New
Collaborative VCMA Projects Specific role(s) of GDN(s) participating in a collaborative VCMA Project	Cadent Lead WWU - delivery
Date of PEA submission	April 2026
Project start and end date	April 2026 – March 2028
Project location	England and Wales
Sectors involved (include only those involved)	Gas Distribution Network Charitable Organisation
Project contact	
Name	Phil Burrows
Contact details	Email address: phil.m.burrows@cadentgas.com Contact number: 07773545451
Project partners and third parties involved	
Organisation name	**Role**
RAD	Lead delivery partner
Costs and funding	
Total cost (£k)	£300,000
Total VCMA funding required (£k)	£300,000 Cadent £200,000.00 WWU £100,000.00 Total project costs £300,000.00
Total BAU vulnerability and CO safety activity baseline allowance funding by activity (£k)	N/A

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Problem(s)

This section needs to outline the problem(s) which is/are being addressed by the VCMA project.

Across the UK, many deaf individuals, particularly those who communicate primarily through British Sign Language (BSL) face significant barriers to accessing essential information and support services. A large proportion of this community experiences levels of hearing loss that make spoken communication inaccessible, and because English is often a second language, written information can be difficult to understand. As a result, deaf people frequently encounter obstacles when trying to obtain advice, engage with services, or navigate everyday systems. These communication challenges can lead to social isolation, a lack of confidence in seeking help, and reduced awareness of key services of entitlements.

Economic disadvantage further compounds these issues. Deaf adults are substantially more likely to be unemployed or in low paid work, which increases their likelihood of living in fuel poverty. Many rent their homes, have limited savings and do not benefit from occupational pensions. Limited access to mainstream media means they often miss critical updates about financial assistance, such as Pension Credit and they may struggle to complete forms in written English for benefits, grants or energy related support. For older deaf people, mistrust or discomfort in working with hearing professionals particularly when communication depends on interpreters creates and additional layer to exclusion.

RAD is a trusted source of information because it provides content directly in BSL and understands deaf culture, enabling quicker rapport and more effective communication. Deaf people are more likely to seek support from RAD channels then from different service providers. However, the support available to them is inconsistent across the country and crucial information, especially related to energy, safety and financial resilience is not readily accessible in their first language.

This results in four major gaps, no national offering for accessible information, no nationwide partnership for access to information on the Priority Services Register (PSR), no national approach regarding access to Carbon Monoxide awareness for deaf individuals and information on financial help that is inconsistent leaves deaf people limited in obtaining the correct advice. Together these gaps mean that deaf communities are not receiving the full protections, entitlements and essential safety information that other consumers can routinely access.

Scope and objectives

Outline the scope and objectives of the VCMA project linked to the problem statement above. This should be clearly defined including the benefits which would directly impact customers on the participating GDNs' network(s), and where the benefits of the VCMA Projects lie.

The challenges faced by deaf people across England and Walkes, particularly those who use BSL as their first or preferred language highlight a significant gap in access to essential information on energy efficiency, safety and financial resilience. Limited access to mainstream communication channels, reduced confidence engaging with hearing and inconsistent availability of accessible advice leave many deaf individuals unaware of key services such as the Priority Services Register (PSR), carbon monoxide (CO) safety info0rmation and energy efficiency support. This collaboration project between RAD, Cadent and WWU seeks to address these barriers by creating a national consistent and culturally appropriate model of support delivered directly in BSL.

At the core of this project is the ambition to improve service access, increase accessibility, strengthen informed engagement and empower deaf people to make confident decisions about their wellbeing and household energy use. The project will deliver high quality information, advice and guidance in BSL ensuring that deaf

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consumers can access essential messages in a language and format that meets their needs. This includes tailored advice on PSR registrations, CO awareness and safety behaviours, energy efficiency and income maximisation. By delivering information in BSL and recognising the cultural dynamics of the deaf community, the project aims to remove long standing communication barriers and support fair, equitable access to services.

The projects scope also includes the provision of a wraparound support model, offering ongoing practical help alongside tailored guidance. This may include one-to-one assistance, digital support or help navigating application processes for grants, benefits or energy related schemes, ensuring deaf households can fully understand, complete and benefit from the services available to them. The wraparound approach strengthens the ability of deaf people to independently manage their energy needs and access entitlements that improve financial and personal resilience.

To empower individuals and strengthen community network, the project will also deliver a range of workshops and life skill programmes. These sessions will cover topics such as understanding household energy use, staying safe at home, smart savings, budgeting and improving consumer confidence when interacting with service providers. The workshops will be delivered in BSL and designed with deaf culture in mind, supporting both learning and peer connection.

A key element of the project is community engagement and partnership building. RAD, Cadent and WWU will work together to expand community networks, strengthen local engagement channels and create opportunities for deaf residents to come together for learning, discussion and social interaction. By building trust through consistent culturally competent engagement, the project will ensure that deaf individuals feel supported, informed and more confident in navigating the services that improve their safety, wellbeing and financial stability.

Through these combined activities the collaboration aims to create a national model that not only addresses today's barriers but also leaves a legacy of improved access, increased understanding and stronger confidence for deaf communities across England and Wales.

Project design engagement

This must detail;

- *Targeting vulnerability support: This must describe how the GDN(s) identified the vulnerability need being addressed through the VCMA project, including the use of consumer research, and data and technology.*
- *Evidence of stakeholder and/or customer support: Information regarding all stakeholder and/or customer engagement which has contributed to the development of the VCMA Project.*

Stakeholder project design input: How stakeholders were actively involved in the project design, and how their input and feedback were incorporated to shape the project design. Where stakeholders disagree about the project design, justification must be provided for why the current project design is deemed preferable

Cadent's earlier collaboration with RAD, delivered between April 2023 and 2025, provided extensive insight into the needs of deaf communities and demonstrated the value of accessible, culturally competent support. Over the two-year period the programme engaged more than 6,000 deaf individuals and highlighted where advice and safeguarding services could be strengthened to better meet the needs of BSL users.[1] Building on these

[1] Cadent_Report_Template_One Column_Option3.docx

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findings, Cadent recognised there were further gaps in provision across the wider network areas, particularly in regions not previously covered.

These learnings informed the decision to invite WWU to join the partnership, enabling the approach to be extended into Wales and ensuring the benefits of the model could reach a broader population. Since WWU joined the collaboration, the three organisations have continued to work closely with RAD to refine and implement the delivery model. The initial phase of work in the WWU region has already provided valuable insight into the specific experiences and communication barriers faced by deaf residents in Wales, helping to shape adjustments to the service design and ensure regional relevance.

The proposed service has been co-designed with RAD from the outset with project measures shaped by evidence, practice based learning and direct feedback from deaf communities. RAD's expertise in BSL and deaf culture has ensured that the design of the collaborative offer remains firmly grounded in lived experience, and that adaptations reflect what has worked well in previous delivery while also addressing areas where further support is needed.

Collectively this engagement led approach has informed a strengthened project model that is responsive, inclusive and aligned to the everyday realities of deaf people across England and Wales. The ongoing collaboration between Cadent, WWU and RAD continues to shape the future direction of the project, ensuring it remains effective, accessible and capable of addressing the evolving needs of the communities it serves.

Why the project is being funded through the VCMA

This should include an explanation of why the VCMA project meets the VCMA eligibility criteria, and how it aligns with the GDN's VCMA collaborative strategy.

This project meets this eligibility criteria, as the project aligns with the GDNs collaborative vulnerability strategy, in which we have a clear ambition to keep our communities safe and warm, and to support those most in need by helping vulnerable households not just today but as we invest in a green energy future.

This project aligns with two of the objectives of our collaborative vulnerability strategy:

- Help more vulnerable households access energy safeguarding services
- Support our customers' move towards net zero, tailored according to their needs and circumstances

To achieve our strategic ambition and realise our objectives, we've set four priority delivery areas:

- Providing direct services for customers
- Reducing carbon monoxide harm
- Supporting priority vulnerable groups
- Tackling fuel poverty and affordability

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How VCMA funding complements or supplements BAU activities

Where the VCMA Project is being delivered alongside a BAU vulnerability and/or CO safety activity or activities funded through the GDN's baseline allowance, the GDN must provide sufficient evidence that the VCMA Project complements or supplements the BAU activity or activities to prevent the risk of double funding.

This project enhances BAU activities by ensuring that CO advice is delivered as part of a broader package of support for people who face additional vulnerabilities. Rather than offering standalone safety messages, the initiative embeds CO awareness within a holistic approach designed to help individuals stay warm, safe and informed within their homes. RAD's longstanding reputation within the deaf community means that people accessing their services, whether in person, through community engagement or via digital platforms can trust the accuracy and relevance of the guidance provided. Government feedback has consistently that individuals who are digitally excluded or harder to reach often prefer to receive essential information face to face and from a source they recognise and trust. RAD is well placed to meet that need.

This collaborative approach strengthens the ability to identify issues affecting vulnerable consumers early particularly those who may struggle to engage with or understand utility related processes. Through RAD's established relationships with deaf individuals and their networks, people who require additional safeguarding or energy related support can be connected swiftly to the right services, ensuring timely interventions.

As a trusted and culturally competent organisation RAD is uniquely positions to engage with deaf people who might not otherwise seek assistance. Their role includes identifying individuals who may be eligible for BAU funded measures such as CO alarms or other support that promotes safety, independence and improved household resilience. By working closely with Cadent and WWU, RAD helps ensure that deaf consumers receive equitable access to the protections, services and advice routinely available to the wider population.

Outcomes, associated actions and success criteria

Details of the VCMA Project outcomes and the associated actions to achieve these, interim milestones and how the Funding Licensee will evaluate whether the project has been successful. Each action should have a proportion of the funding allocated.

RAD, Cadent and WWU will carry out monthly reporting reviews on measurable outcomes against targets to ensure successful delivery. Quarterly reviews will provide the opportunity for more in-depth analysis and the ability to highlight insights and learnings to share, as well as identity any risks and requirement for any associated actions to mitigate these.

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Key outcomes expected from this project:

Service	Reach	WWU Target (over 2 years)	Cadent Target (over 2 years)
PSR Conversations	Number of unique individuals where a conversation on the PSR has been had either 1:1 or in a group (case work, events or in a workshop)	750	2000
PSR Sign Ups	Number of individuals signed on to the PSR	200	400
Benefit Appointments	Number of unique individuals that have had 1:1 appointments relating to benefit/income	300	750
EE Conversations	Number of unique individuals where a conversation on Energy Efficiency has been had either 1:1 or group (case work, events or in a workshop)	750	2000
CO Conversations	Number of unique individuals where a conversation on CO Awareness has been had either 1:1 or group (case work, events or in a workshop)	750	2000
Onward Referrals	Number of unique individuals that have been referred on to other organisations	200	400

Success Criteria

During this 2-year project, RAD will provide accessible support by;

Service Delivery – Deaf Energy Hub: Access to a centralised hub for deaf people, building a safe and accessible environment. Provide appointment/drop in based information, advice and guidance appointments.

- Regular advice service at RAD's London Hub (Cadent only)
- Community based advice service (advice on tour)
- Remote based advice service (advice online)

Outreach and Events: Build trust through targeted community engagement, organise large-scale community events with expert panels, including community forums

- Minimum 2x community information days (RAD on Tour)
- Attendance at community events

Workshops: Host accessible workshops on topics such as PSR, energy efficiency, staying safe, smart savings etc.

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- Regular workshops (online and face to face)

Referral and signposting: Identifying needs of referrals to services such as housing, social care and health advocacy etc.

Sustainability: Resource bank of top tips and information clips in BSL hosted via RAD's information hub

- Video creations

Potential for new learning

Provide details of what the GDN(s) expect(s) to learn and how the learning will be disseminated

By undertaking this collaborative project with RAD, Cadent and WWU stand to gain significant new insights into how to design and deliver services that genuinely meet the needs of deaf communities. The project expands on earlier learning from Cadent's 2023-2025 work with RAD, which highlighted how deaf individuals face substantial barriers in accessing essential information when it is not available in BSL. As stated earlier deaf people experience inconsistent access to CO awareness, PSR information and energy efficiency support due to communication challenges and limited trust in mainstream services. External evidence reinforces this: RAD's partnership work with Cadent shows that deaf people are far more likely to seek information from RAD channels, as they provide trusted, culturally competent communication directly in BSL.[2] For Cadent and WWU, working closely with RAD provides an opportunity to deepen understanding of how communication formats, cultural norms and differing levels of English literacy directly influence service accessibility and engagement outcomes.

The project will also offer meaningful learning about how specialised; community embedded delivery models can extend the reach of gas network safeguarding activities. Cadent's published accessibility insights demonstrate that working collaboratively with RAD has enabled them to reach audiences they not otherwise engage, deaf consumers who do not access mainstream media and therefore miss critical safety and financial information.[3] This aligns with the projects objective to build a national, consistent model for BSL led advice and wraparound support that strengthens independence, confidence and safety for deaf households across England and Wales. Additionally, RAD's expansion of trained IAG advisers, demonstrates how investment skills within partner organisations can create sustainable capacity and improve service reach for vulnerable communities, a valuable operation insight for both Cadent and WWU. Taken together, these learnings will help refine future vulnerability strategies, inform inclusive communication approaches and strengthen cross sector partnership models that ensure safeguarding services reach those more at risk of being left behind.

Aligning with and supporting wider vulnerability approaches

Details of how the project supports or aligns with approaches to vulnerability taken by the wider energy industry, other utilities and/or consumer organisations; local, national or devolved governments; or evidence innovation or a gap in vulnerability support provision. For example, this could include evidence of collaboration beyond the VCMA, non-VCMA joint funding of the initiative, or identified gaps in the provision of vulnerability services which the project seeks to address. The GDN should show how the project fits within broader approaches to vulnerability

The collaboration with RAD has been shaped by a solid evidence base built throughout GD2, drawing on data, insights and frontline experience that informed both the development of training and the evolution of ongoing

[2] Cadent Gas Deaf Support | RAD
[3] Increasing our accessibility - Cadent Gas Ltd

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support services. Moving into GD3 Cadent and WWU are adopting a more strategic approach, underpinned by stakeholder feedback on what proved effective during GD2. We recognise that truly listening to customers, understanding their concerns, priorities and lives realities is essential to earning trust. This trust is central to influencing positive change as is selecting the right partners to deliver important messages credibly and compassionately.

By bringing together national priorities and wider industry objectives into one integrated empathetic model, the partnership enhances the collective safety net for people facing vulnerabilities. This ensures that the support offered is not only consistent and well-coordinated but also sensitive and responsive to the circumstances many individuals are experiencing.

Monitoring and evaluation

Details of how the GDNs will work with their project partners to monitor the impact of the VCMA project and evaluate its effectiveness and success.

Cadent and WWU have worked with RAD to design a partnership and project that aligns with the delivery of our Vulnerability Strategy and VCMA governance criteria.

Cadent will coordinate quarterly online meetings with WWU and the RAD lead to discuss successes, problems and best practice to ensure that any barriers are highlighted and dealt with in a timely manner.

We have also agreed quarterly progress reports and where we can facilitate project visits to see the project delivery first hand.

Scale of VCMA project and SROI calculations, including NPV

Justify the scale of the VCMA project – including the scale of the investment relative to its potential benefits. As part of this, the Funding Licensee(s) should provide the SROI calculation, including NPV. Note: The value in numbers of the SROI and NPV must be provided, rather than confirmation of positive impact.

Together with the other Gas Distribution Networks we worked with leading social impact research consultancy SIRIO Strategies on the development of the Industry Standard Social Value Framework and supporting GDN Rulebook. We have used that GDN Rulebook to carry out an assessment of financial and wellbeing outcomes applicable to our services for vulnerable households included in this partnership.

We've incorporated social value based on the deliverables and associated targets detailed above. Carrying out an assessment of these predicted outcomes we forecast a positive net Social Return on Investment of £8.60 for every £1 spent.

Social value measurement

Total cost*	£300,000.00
Total gross present value	£2,722,244.86
Net Present Value (NPV)	£2,438,780.50
SROI	£8.60

*Accounting for inflationary factors over the term of the project.

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Internal governance and project management evidence

Provide a description of GDN(s) review of proposal and project sign off, with details on how the project will be managed.

The GDN's have worked alongside YMCA to co-design this partnership and ensures that it aligns to the delivery of our Vulnerability Strategy and the VCMA governance criteria.

The SROI for this project has been calculated utilising the information shared by YMCA. We have based the SROI on those figures which has generated a forecast SROI of £8.60 using the GDN rulebook.

The GDN's will meet quarterly to review outcomes, learn, share best practice, ensure the correct customers are being supported, and address any delivery issues.

The PEA has been reviewed and approved through each network's internal governance processes and formally signed off by the relevant senior leaders.

GDN	Approver (Name and Role)	Date
Cadent	Phil Burrows, Head of Customer Vulnerability	04/04/2026
WWU	Gwyn Thomas, Communications & Customer Senior Manager	10 October 2026

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Eligibility Criteria

Eligibility Criteria	Description	Project qualifies Yes / No
Positive SROI	Have a positive, or a forecasted positive, Social Return on Investment (SROI) calculated in accordance with a model which the GDNs have developed and submitted to Ofgem including for the gas consumers funding the VCMA Project	Yes
Positive NPV	Have a positive, or a forecasted positive Net Present Value (NPV)	Yes
Support Criteria	Either: i. provide support to consumers in Vulnerable Situations and relate to Energy Safeguarding, or ii. provide support for those most at risk of being left behind in the transition to net zero, or iii. provide awareness of, and education on, the dangers of CO beyond the activities funded as business as usual (BAU) through baseline allowances, or iv. reduce the risk of harm caused by CO	Yes
Defined Outcomes	Have specific, measurable, and time-bound outcomes which align with relevant Consumer Vulnerability Strategy objectives to achieve the requirements set out in Support Criteria above;	Yes
Beyond Other Funding	Go beyond activities that are funded through other price control mechanism(s), including baseline allowance funding, or required through licence obligations	Yes
Support or Align	Support or align with approaches to vulnerability taken by the wider energy industry, other utilities and/or consumer organisations, and local, national and devolved government, or evidence innovation or a gap in vulnerability support provision;	Yes
No Other External Funding	Not be delivered through other external funding sources directly accessed by a GDN, including through other government (national, devolved or local) funding	Yes
BAU vulnerability and CO safety activities	Where a GDN's BAU vulnerability and CO safety activities are funded through baseline allowances, these are not suitable for funding through the VCMA. The GDN is permitted to use VCMA funds to supplement or complement its BAU activities, however, it must ensure that its reporting provides sufficient evidence to prevent double funding.	Yes

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Eligibility criteria for company specific essential gas appliance servicing

Eligibility Criteria	**Description**	**Project qualifies Yes / No or N/A**
Servicing must meet the following criteria:	Either: i. A GDN has had to isolate and condemn an essential gas appliance following a supply interruption or as part of its emergency service role; or ii. A GDN or its Project Partner has identified an essential gas appliance which has not been serviced in the last 12 months in the owner-occupied home of a customer in a Vulnerable Situation where an occupier of the property suffers from a permanent or temporary health condition12 that makes them more vulnerable to health risks associated with cold homes; or iii. A GDN or its Project Partner has identified an essential gas appliance which has not been serviced in the last 12 months in a tenant-occupied home of a customer in a Vulnerable Situation where it is the tenant's responsibility to maintain the essential gas appliance, where an occupier of the property suffers from a permanent or temporary health condition that makes them more vulnerable to health risks associated with cold homes	n/a
Affordability	The household cannot afford to service the essential gas appliance, as assessed against the affordability criteria set out in the VCMA governance document	n/a
Funding	Sufficient funding is not available from other sources (including a social or private landlord and national, devolved, or local government funding) to fund the essential gas appliance servicing	n/a

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Eligibility criteria for company specific essential gas appliance repair and replacement

Eligibility Criteria	**Description**	**Project qualifies Yes / No or N/A**
Unsafe pipework and essential gas appliance repair or replacement must meet the following criteria:	Either: i. GDN has had to isolate and condemn unsafe pipework or an essential gas appliance following a supply interruption or as part of its emergency service role; or ii. A GDN or its Project Partner has had to condemn unsafe pipework, or an essential gas appliance, following an essential gas appliance service (as described in 3.19 of the VCMA governance document)	n/a
Health condition	Either: i. The occupier of the property suffers from a permanent or temporary health condition that makes them more vulnerable to health risks associated with cold homes and has a household income of £31,000 or below in 2025/26 prices, adjusted for inflation using Consumer Price Index with Housing costs (CPIH) 13, or ii. the household cannot afford to service the essential gas appliance, as assessed against the affordability criteria set out in Appendix 1 of the VCMA governance document	n/a
Funding	Sufficient funding is not available from other sources (including national, devolved, or local government funding) to fund the unsafe pipework or the essential gas appliance repair or replacement.	n/a

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